

HOUSE BILL 2583

By White

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4; Title 11, Chapter 4; Title 43; Title 44; Title 49 and Title 67, relative to agriculture.

WHEREAS, agriculture is Tennessee's largest industry, contributing approximately \$74.8 billion to Tennessee's economy each year, employing 349,000 Tennesseans, and having diverse production ranging from row crops and livestock to local food and viniculture; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee is home to over 1,600 registered food and beverage companies creating a myriad of products that can be sourced locally; and

WHEREAS, there are 67,300 Tennessee farmers, across 9 million acres of land and \$4.28 billion in cash receipts, and agriculture has an impact on every county in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee farmers are innovative and have traditionally been leaders in a range of new production approaches, such as no-till; technologies, such as robotic milkers; and market opportunities, such as malt barley; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has the opportunity to be the leading state in bringing together farmer-led innovation and entrepreneurship to create a diverse foundation of rural and agricultural enterprises and wealth creation; and

WHEREAS, AgTech includes innovations related to software, hardware, robotics, sensors, precision agriculture, predictive agriculture, big data, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and veterinary technology, state-of-the-art equipment, and related technologies that support the farms of the future; and

WHEREAS, the AgLaunch Initiative was created as an independent nonprofit organization through a joint initiative with the Tennessee department of agriculture to develop

new agriculture enterprises, stimulate private investment, and position farmers in a leadership position to shape the future of agriculture; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1.

(a) There is created an advisory task force of farmers and foresters to lead a strategic planning process and resulting implementation plan to position this state as a leading hub for agtech and value-added agriculture.

(b) The task force consists of twelve (12) members, including nine (9) full-time farmers and foresters deriving one hundred percent (100%) of their income from farming, including crop, forestry, or livestock production, or directly related activities, such as agritourism, on-farm education, or farmer-owned value-added activities, who are recognized by their peers as early adopters, forward thinkers, and leaders in the agricultural industry, and representatives of three (3) agricultural businesses with one hundred percent (100%) ownership by residents of this state that are engaged in local processing or agricultural-related innovation. The members of the task force must represent diverse segments of the agriculture industry, including crops, livestock, local food, and urban agriculture. The members of the task force are appointed as follows:

(1) The speaker of the senate shall appoint four (4) persons;

(2) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint four (4) persons; and

(3) The commissioner of agriculture shall appoint four (4) persons.

(c) Members of the task force shall elect a chair from their membership.

(d) Members of the task force:

(1) May create a scope of work and issue a request for proposals (RFP) for a third-party consulting firm to develop a statewide strategy for agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship led by the farming community; and

(2) Provide oversight to the strategy process, roadmap, investment, and implementation plan ensuring that the resulting plan includes:

(A) Comprehensive analysis of top issues facing farmers and identification of technology platforms to address these issues;

(B) Identification of industry linkages and gaps in the value chain to connect farmers to new opportunities;

(C) Analysis of new opportunities, including farmer data, ecosystem markets, and traceability and their potential effect on the bottom line for a farm operation; and

(D) Recommendations and action plans from the strategic planning process that have coherent synergies to education, workforce, and talent development initiatives, or specific recommendations to make sure that there is alignment, as well as actionable connectivity, to the agricultural and forestry organizations and universities that serve this state's agriculture and forestry industry.

(e) The task force will be managed through the department of agriculture.

(f) The appointing authorities shall strive to ensure that the makeup of the task force reflects the racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural, and economic diversity of this state.

(g) The commissioner of agriculture shall call the first meeting of the task force, which may hold up to three (3) scheduled meetings to hear testimony from members of the public and to solicit input from persons with expertise in current agricultural practices, as well as future trends related to consumer purchasing patterns, product development, crop diversity, and agricultural technologies and with knowledge of its economic impact on rural areas of this state.

(h) The task force must adopt its findings and recommendations by a majority vote of its total membership.

(i) The chair of the task force may call on appropriate state agencies for reasonable assistance in the work of the task force.

(j) The task force shall hold public meetings and utilize technological means, such as webcasts, to gather feedback on its recommendations.

(k) The members of the task force serve without compensation.

(l) The task force shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including a strategic roadmap and investment plan, to the general assembly no later than April 1, 2021, including an implementation plan and recommended legislative action.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.